DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 214 252 EA 014 474

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TITLE Assistance and Enforcement as Strategies for Knowledge Transfer and Program Reform.
INSTITUTION Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.
PUB DATE Jan 82
NOTE 40p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Compliance (Legal); *Diffusion; Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Educational Legislation; Education Service Centers; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Regulation; *Information Dissemination; Intermediate Administrative Units; Linking Agents; Research Utilization; *Technical Assistance
IDENTIFIERS Monitoring; New Jersey; Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the promotion of reform and knowledge use in school districts, this paper reports on data from a study investigating assistance and enforcement strategies adopted by three types of regional educational service agencies. Assistance in this context means provision of legal or program knowledge needed to operate successful programs. Enforcement means monitoring of programs to make sure regulations or mandates are being carried out. The research project asked two questions: Do individuals who play enforcement or assistance roles feel comfortable combining the two? and, Can the two roles successfully be combined? Data were collected from intermediate units in Pennsylvania and educational improvement centers and county offices of New Jersey. Data were collected through site visits incorporating questionnaires and interviews. Findings indicate that those charged with enforcement responsibility would also like to provide assistance. There are important limitations, however, to the kinds of assistance they can provide. They can link districts to sources of training and specialized assistance but they cannot provide these services themselves because of time constrictions and because local educators seem unwilling to utilize assistance from individuals who also have monitoring responsibilities. (Author/JM)

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ASSISTANCE AND ENFORCEMENT AS STRATEGIES FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND PROGRAM REFORM

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EA 014 474

ABSTRACT

State and Federal agencies use both enforcement and assistance/knowledge transfer as strategies to promote local reform. While research has been conducted on each strategy, there has been little effort to examine how they can be combined. This paper reports on data from a study which investigates both assistance and enforcement strategies adopted by three types of Regional Educational Service Agencies created to promote knowledge use in school. The results indicate that enforcers want to work more in the helping mode and that the two responsibilities are difficult to combine. Implications of these findings are offered for both the research and policy communities.

ASSISTANCE AND ENFORCEMENT AS STRATEGIES FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND PROGRAM REFORM[1]

A major task for state and federal agencies responsible for program implementation is to shape the behavior and objectives of agencies at lower levels (Bardach, 1977; Elmore, 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). Even where program implementation is not an issue, government agencies may have to work through other units to accomplish their purposes. Thus, the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Education are responsible for seeing that research on specific topics is conducted by universities and private organizations and then for promoting the use of that research in a variety of hospitals, mental hospitals, and schools.

To obtain the cooperation of other organizations, the initiating agency may rely on any of a number of strategies including the generation and enforcement of mandates (Elmore 1980; Iannaconne, 1981) and the dissemination of knowledge through the use of human "linking agents" (Hood and Cates, 1978) and through networks or interorganizational arrangements (Huberman et al., 1981). There is a growing disenchantment with the use of enforcement that is apparent, not only in the policies of the Reagan administration, but also in the writings of policy analysts (Bardach, 1977; Berman, 1981; Elmore, 1980). Yet, these same analysts recognize that there are situations when enforcement may be a step towards program reform if it is combined with some sort of assistance. Meanwhile, there is a growing body of literature which has been summarized by Louis (1981) which suggests that, at least in the field of education, assistance strategies using human helpers are effective for

stimulating change at the local level and encouraging the use of knowledge to improve practice. Even here there are reservations, however, because of the fear that districts most in need of reform will not take advantage of available assistance (McLaughlin, 1981). It seems likely that some combination of enforcement and assistance might be most effective to improve practice and get knowledge into use. As Henry Brickell (1980; p. 202) suggests, "The classic one-two punch in educational change is a stinging mandate followed by a powerful technical assist." However, research on these two reform strategies has proceeded on separate lines so there is very little guidance as to how to combine enforcement and assistance in the most effective manner.

This paper uses data from a study of Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) to explore some of the issues related to combining enforcement and assistance to promote program reform and knowledge use in education. In 39 different states, RESAs form a layer of agencies between the state and local levels of education (Yin and Gwaltney, 1981). They serve a variety of functions including providing training and technical assistance services to school districts and, in some states, enforcing state and federal statues. We will focus on the field staff employed by the RESA to work with school systems to learn more about the feasibility of combining enforcement and assistance activities in the same position.

Enforcement and Assistance

In the last decade, there has been a major increase in the use of legislative and regulatory mandates to promote reform in education.

Federal mandates refer primarily to equality of opportunity--especially school desegregation, the treatment of the handicapped, sex discrimination, and hiring opportunities. More recently, there has been a major growth in mandates at the state level as well (Wise, 1979). State governments have required various forms of PPBS (program planning and budgeting systems), curriculum planning procedures, minimum competency testing, and high school graduation requirements as well as older regulations governing staff certification and the allocation of time to different curriculum areas. The growth of regulation has slowed in the new climate created by the Reagan administration, but it is too soon to know whether this period is one of reversal or--as Kirst and Jung (1980) suggest--of retrenchment.

Whatever the future of enforcement efforts as reform strategies, there has been considerable discontent with their results to date. In fact they have often misfired in one of two ways. First, in many situations, there has been substantial noncompliance with many of these mandates (Boyd, 1978). For instance, major provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act were simply not followed for the first five years after it was passed (Murphy, 1971) although the situation has since improved (Kirst and Jung, 1980). A second problem has to do with the displacement of both district compliance and state and federal monitoring efforts. The emphasis shifts from following the spirit to following the letter of the law. Thus, there is more concern with seeing that rules and regulations such as allocation formulae are followed than for making sure that children are better served (Elmore, 1980).

There are undoubtedly a number of reasons for the disappointing efforts to promote reform through regulation. One that is especially relevant to those interested in knowledge use stems from a failure to distinguish between the absence of the will to comply and limited capacity. According to Berman (1981), the theories that policy makers and implementers use explain the ineffectiveness of enforcement efforts by reference to resistance at the local level. However, even when the will is present, compliance with many mandates requires substantial changes in both the organization for service delivery within educational agencies and in the skills required for instruction. These require that local educators develop skills and knowledge not currently available to them.

In fact two kinds of knowledge are needed as can be seen from McLaughlin's (1978) analysis of implementation failures related to Title I. The first is legal knowledge, an understanding of what regulations really require. In the late 60s and early 70s, Title I regulations were long, complicated, and not summarized in a succinct, understandable form. As a result, local educators were unsure of what was required of them when they did try to comply.

The second kind of knowledge relates to program concerns. When Title I was passed, it was assumed that the compensatory programs for raising the skills of poor and underachieving students were readily available. In fact, they were not. Even when they became available, local educators did not always know about them until more effective dissemination systems became available to spread such knowledge.

These studies suggest that compliance within the spirit of reform legislation can be facilitated by increasing the access of local professionals to the legal and program knowledge needed to operate successful programs within the law. Thus, an important question is how can such access be improved?

In the last decade, a body of evidence has developed which shows that dissemination systems that put human helpers in contact with school systems are effective in putting such knowledge to use. This evidence comes primarily from evaluations of four federal programs that use helpers as an important part of their dissemination and implementation efforts: The Pilot State Dissemination Project of the late 60s (Louis and Sieber, 1979), The National Diffusion Network (Emrick, Peterson, and Agarwala-Rogers, 1977), The State Capacity Building Grants Program (Royster et al., 1981), and the Research and Development Utilization Program (Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981).

To show the importance of hands-on assistance, these successful cases can be contrasted to a program to develop Project Information Packages (PIPs)--sets of materials designed to provide local educators with the information needed to install and operate effective approaches for compensatory education. These PIPs were not to be used with external human assistance. However, the evaluation of the program's pilot efforts indicated that the use of PIPs without human assistance was unlikely to lead to complex organizational and behavioral changes (Stearns and Norwood, 1977). More generally, a review of twenty years of curriculum development work indicates that efforts to put those curricula into

practice without extensive networks of human helpers and disseminators has been relatively unsuccessful (Welch, 1979).

Although most of the relevant research has come from examinations of federal projects, there is some confirmatory data from research on RESAs. Case studies of three such agencies as networks for knowledge utilization explain their success by pointing to the informal interpersonal networks that are created between RESA staff and the educators served by those agencies (Yin and Gwaltney, 1981).

It has been fairly well established that human helpers can promote the use of knowledge to improve educational practice. However, there is an important caveat to generalizing from these studies to situations where such assistance might be used in conjunction with enforcement efforts: Human assistance strategies rely heavily on the voluntary development of the relationship between the assister and the recipient. Careful observational studies of a series of school improvement efforts relying on human helpers indicates that there are serious limitations to the influence those individuals can exert. For instance, whenever tension develops between helpers and school staff, it is consistently resolved in favor of the schools, indicating that helpers can only play the roles local educators allow them to play. Moreover, school conditions are major determinants of the helpers behavior. In addition, successful outcomes of the change projects are more closely associated with teachers', principals', and the district administrators' perception that a significant problem is being addressed than with any behaviors of the helpers (Corbett, 1981; Firestone and Corbett, 1981).

Such findings suggest that combining enforcement and assistance activities will change the dynamics of the assistance relationships in ways that may undermine assistance work. On the other hand, assistance efforts that are not combined with some enforcement work have been criticized as not reaching the schools with the greatest need. If assistance is only available on request, the most sophisticated, progressive districts may be the most likely to seek it rather than those with the weakest programs (McLaughlin, 1981). Thus, while there seems to be good reason to combine enforcement and assistance activities, there is some question as to whether these two approaches are really compatible. To explore this issue, we will ask two questions: Do individuals who play enforcement or assistance roles feel comfortable combining the two; and whatever people want, can the two roles be combined in practice?

1. Do monitors and assisters want to combine roles?

There is very little research on the first question because there have been very few studies of the monitors responsible for ensuring that regulations are carried out and because the existing studies of assisters have not explored issues related to compliance. Examinations of Title I monitors indicate that they were, initially at least, indisposed to be aggressive in ensuring that mandates were carried out for two reasons. First, as professional educators they identified closely with the people they were monitoring. Second, at that time, the state and federal agencies responsible for monitoring compliance faced a strong coalition of professional associations committed to defining Title I funds as general aid. This coalition was strong enough to deflect enforcement

efforts and even threaten the responsible agencies and officials. Thus, an unwillingness to take a strong monitoring stance reflected the agencies' survival needs (Murphy, 1971). This research does not indicate whether these monitors were willing to adopt active assistance roles. However, in a study of project officers in a later reform effort, Corwin (1977) found a willingess to combine enforcement and assistance activities. Moreover, the project officers he studied indicated a strong preference for the latter activity. Although these studies are only suggestive, they indicate considerable dislike for the monitoring or enforcement role and, at least in some circumstances, a preference for assistance.

2. Can enforcement and assistance be combined in one position?

While the the combination of assistance and enforcement in the same reform efforts would seem to benefit both, at least two difficulties can be anticipated to combining both sets of duties in the same role. The first is the problem of role overload. The effort to have one person carry out two complex functions could create a situation where neither is done well. The project officers studied by Corwin (1977) combined enforcement and assistance activities. However, they only handled from two to seven projects, each of which was an award to one small school district. This is an unusually low number of projects. By contrast the early Title I monitoring offices examined by Murphy (1971) were so severely understaffed that they could not seriously consider the possibility of offering substantial assistance.

The second problem is one of trust. For helpers to be effective, the client must be able to share a great deal of information about the internal problems of a school. For instance, many of the assistance programs begin with some sort of needs assessment activity (Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981; Louis and Sieber, 1979). If the client is unable to share potentially embarassing or damaging information, later assistance efforts could be significantly misdirected. Such might be the case if the helper is also a monitor charged with enforcing legal mandates.

To address these issues, we examine the work of field staff in three sets of RESAs in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The sample of agencies chosen is useful for two reasons. First, they have very different formal missions with regard to assistance and enforcement activities. Second, by focusing on these agencies, it is possible to cut across several programs and mandates. Before addressing these questions, the following sections introduce the agencies and describe our research methods.

The Agencies

In 1979, we began a program of research to explore how RESAs contribute to knowledge use. The study examines Pennsylvania's Intermediate Units (IUs) and the Educational Improvement Centers (EICs) and County Offices of New Jersey.[2] Pennsylvania's 29 IUs were formed in 1970 when the state's county offices reorganized after a massive program of district consolidation. They have a broad mission to provide special education, curriculum development, educational planning and a variety of other services. In addition they may offer any other services agreed to

by a majority of school boards in the regions served (Dario, 1976). Over 80% of IU budgets in the '70s were for the operation of special education programs; special education funds go to IUs rather than to school districts in Pennsylvania. The average IU has 241 staff, and the largest portion of these people are special education teachers and supervisors. In the special education area, these agencies have some enforcement responsibility since they must ensure that their own staffs and school district educators follow state and federal special education mandates, including those requiring that children be "mainstreamed"--i.e., placed in regular classrooms--wherever possible and that an individual educational plan (IEP) be developed for each special education student.

For the most part, however, IUs promote the image of a general assistance agency providing help in many areas including those outside of special education. Most have from one to 12 individuals who provide training and technical assistance services in a variety of curriculum and administrative areas. These people coordinate regional inservice programs, provide workshops for specific districts, serve as consultants to curriculum development efforts, and coordinate contacts between the region and assorted state and federal educational agencies. The average IU serves a region of over 1600 square miles including 19 school districts.

New Jersey's four EICs were formed between 1967 and 1975. Their mission is to "on request. . . provide support and assistance to local school districts and to members of teaching and administrative staff through the delivery of materials, techniques and expertise necessary to

improve school programs and services" (State of New Jersey, Chapter 58, Laws of 1978). Thus their mission is narrower than that of the IUs and focuses specifically on provision of knowledge through training and technical assistance. They do not provide services to students. EIC staffs fluctuate considerably in size because these agencies rely heavily on special program funds won from state and federal agencies. In 1980, the average EIC had approximately 60 staff, half of them served helping roles by offering workshops in a variety of content areas to school districts, providing consulting services in those same areas, and operating a small resource center/library. The average EIC serves 148 districts spread over 1960 square miles.

While the EICs and IUs have their own boards of directors, New Jersey's 21 County Offices operate as branch offices of the State Department of Education, and their responsibility is primarily regulatory. In 1975, New Jersey passed its Thorough and Efficient Education law (T&E) which required among other things, that school districts follow a state mandated planning process and that schools achieve above minimum criterion levels of a state-designed basic skills test. Should districts not meet these requirements, the state can legally take over operation of the district (New Jersey State Board of Education, 1980). This state education legislation is among the most regulatory in the nation (Wise, 1979); and since its passage, the legislature has passed additional laws and mandatory high school graduation competency requirements as well.

From 1975 through 1980 County Offices were responsible for monitoring school districts to ensure that they complied with state requirements. Since 1980 although the monitoring responsibilities have not been

relaxed, the New Jersey Department of Education has encouraged the County Offices to take on more assistance roles as well. The average County Office has seven professionals, six of whom work in the field by visiting schools to monitor compliance, responding to requests for information, and overseeing local career education, vocational education, and special education programs.

Data Collection

In the fall of 1980, site visits were made to 23 agencies: 11 IUs, two FICs, and 10 County Offices. These agencies were selected after consultation with state department staff and agency directors to ensure variation in size, population density, distribution throughout each state, and reputation for helping educators keep abreast of knowledge relevant to their work.[3] It was assumed that the best information on the nature of the assistance and enforcement roles played in each agency would come from the field staff. Therefore, in each agency data were collected from three to 12 field staff. These individuals were selected by the agency director after discussions with the research staff to clarify that we were looking for individuals doing assistance or enforcement work. People providing direct instructional services (primarily in the IUs) or supervising such work were eliminated. In the 17 smallest agencies we collected data from all agents available, and in the rest more than half were included. Each field agent was interviewed for approximately one hour and asked to complete a questionnaire. Complete data were obtained from 138 individuals.

Mission and Action

Before addressing the questions about assistance and enforcement raised above, it is important to determine which agencies played which role. A review of the missions of the three types of agencies in the study suggests that County Offices are enforcing agencies while EICs and IUs are more assistance oriented. However, McLaughlin (1981) notes that some state agencies charged with enforcement responsibilities actually emphasize providing assistance. Hence, it is important to know what role individual field staff actually play. The survey administered to all field staff (N=138) included one question asking to what extent each individual played 11 different roles. A factor analysis of these responses identifies three different types of activity played by agency field staff.[4] The definitions and items which make up these three roles are as follows:

- Expert/Trainer

  Definition: A specialist in a specific area who makes knowledge available to schools through workshops, inservice, and/or more intensive consultations.

  Items:
  1) Expert on a curriculum area
  2) Workshop presenter

- Liaison

  Definition: A go-between who does not provide knowledge directly, but who helps schools diagnose problems, find resources and/or match appropriate clients with resources.

  Items:
  1) Resource finder
  2) Needs assessor/planner
  3) Coordinator

- Monitor

  Definition: Someone who collects information from schools to determine their compliance with law and code.

  Item: Monitor who identifies discrepancies between regulations and practices.

Basically, monitoring is an enforcement activity while training and liaison are forms of assistance. The difference between the latter two activities is partly in the kind of assistance. Trainers are more likely to work through issues with local educators and to provide training and assistance to solve problems while liaison people identify needs and find resources, including trainers.

Individual field agent scores were computed for each of the three roles.[5] These individual scores were then aggregated to obtain a mean agency score for each activity.[6]

Figure 1 presents a bivariate scattergram distribution of the agency

Figure 1 about here

scores for the two activities of training and monitoring. As would be expected from a review of agency missions, there are two distinct clusters. What distinguishes the two groups is the extent to which they do monitoring. One cluster, including all the County Offices and two small IUs, monitors a great deal while the other does very little. The latter group includes both EICs and most of the IUs. The training pattern is not quite as distinct, but for the most part, the non-monitoring agencies do more

training than the monitoring agencies. Thus, our data suggest that it makes sense to speak of sets of enforcement and assistance agencies.

Enforcers Seek Out Assistance Roles

To examine how enforcement can be accomplished in education, it is instructive to look at the New Jersey County Offices. They represent one of the largest systems for enforcement purposes in the country. In 1975, before the T&E law passed, the 21 County Offices were staffed by 56 professionals. Most of these were in rural counties, especially in the southern part of the state. By 1978, the professional staff had grown to 155, all with some formal responsibility to monitor compliance with state and federal legislation. In comparison with other programs, this is a favorable ratio for monitoring purposes. With 573 operating school districts in the state, there are approximately four districts per staff member. However, the County Offices have a broad mandate to monitor compliance with state mandated planning procedures, tenured teacher evaluation regulations, building codes, and budgeting procedures as well as federal laws. They also are expected to visit all 2411 schools in the state annually. As a result, their monitoring burden is substantial.

Interviews with the field staff of the County Offices indicate that they are often uncomfortable with the enforcement aspect of their work. Some seek to deny that it exists:

> The primary thought in our work is not to act as a monitoring agent.

> I don't do checklist monitoring. I feel more like at TA person. I help districts identify needs.
>
> 1531

In many cases, they seek to define their work as an assistance activity:

> In the internal kind of work we do here, we try to provide service kinds of activities to local districts in terms of helping them meet all of the state and federal requirements for all the kinds of school programs that they offer.
>
> 1730
>
> A lot of my time (one-half to two-thirds) is spent on the phone answering field questions. The rest of my time is spent doing policy clarification and giving solutions to problems in meeting state guidelines and mandates for special education.
>
> 1530

Some even seek to identify themselves with the districts they monitor:

> I am viewed as an adjunct member of the management team of the LEA. In some cases I give workshops, but I usually serve like an administrative role in the district.
>
> 2037

There are two reasons for enforcement staff to deny or downplay that aspect of their work. First, they are drawn from the population they monitor. The bulk of their previous work experience (83%) is in education, either as teachers or administrators. Moreover, these people are drawn from the very geographic areas they now monitor. This is apparent in both their education and their experience. For instance, just over two-thirds of the field staff who score high on monitoring[8] report that they received their highest degree within commuting distance of the region they now serve. Less than half of the rest of the sample received their degrees so close to home. We also constructed a localism-cosmopolitanism scale by

expressing the field agents' professional work experience as a ratio of the difference between experience outside the state and inside the state to the total years of experience. Thus, large negative scores indicate that the largest proportion of a person's previous experience is from the area where he or she now works. The average score for the individuals who do monitoring is -.69 while that for the rest of the sample is -.46.

Second, the New Jersey Department of Education lacks the political muscle to monitor agressively even if field staff want to. Field staff are aware of their limitations. As one of them explains, "You can't hold it over their heads. You can't say 'its the law'" (1632). In fact efforts to carry out monitoring requirements have been costly to the Department of Education and its County Offices. In the summer of 1978, the New Jersey Department of Education's budget line for County Offices was cut by one million dollars, a loss of approximately 45 positions. These positions were only restored after extensive lobbying by the Department. More recently, in the fall of 1981, both candidates for governor of New Jersey stated that the Department's system for monitoring local districts was wasteful and expensive, and both pledged to change the system if elected (Camden Courier-Post, October 20, 1981). Planners within the Department began seeking ways to recast the County Office function almost a year before the election.

Enforcers Do Not Do Training

Given the interest of people with enforcement responsibility in redefining their roles, what options are available? Is it possible to combine assistance and enforcement in a single position? Examination of

the data on field staff activities suggests that monitoring is compatible with liaison assistance, but not with training.

The first step is to look at the survey data on roles played to see what combinations were apparent.[9] The distribution of field agents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

The data in Table 1 suggest that combining two kinds of activities is not unusual (44 individuals score high on two dimensions and 49 on one), but that doing all three is quite rare. More to the point, combining monitoring and training is unusual. Only seven people report doing so. However, combining monitoring and liaison is not so difficult.

To better understand the differences between people who engage in different roles, we investigated the context in which the field agents must operate. We identified seven broad questions which might yield differentiation between roles. They included:

- What are the content areas in which they work?
- How do field agents distribute their time across activities?
- How intensive is their work with schools?
- Who do field agents work with?
- To what extent are activities initiated by field agents?
- Where do field agents turn for the knowledge they need to do their work?
- What strategies do they employ in working with schools?

These questions generated 32 measurable dimensions taken from the interviews and surveys. A comparison of people doing different activities along these 32 dimensions can help us answer two questions. First, where do pure monitors differ from the two sorts of assisters? Second, on what dimensions are the combinations more like one pure type than another?

The differences between monitors and trainers are substantial. They appear on 14 different dimensions as described in Table 2. For dimensions

Table 2 about here

where statistically significant differences exist between the two pure role types, we have plotted the scores on a continuum and have indicated where the mixed types fall along that continuum so that comparisons can be made. As might be expected, trainers provide substantially more service to local educators and are more welcomed in school districts. More trainers work in areas related to curriculum, conduct workshops, and write materials and proposals. Trainers also engage in more long term projects requiring three or more contacts with a school district, work with teachers more, and are more frequently invited into school districts by the districts. They also refer to sources of information more often than do monitors, and use a greater variety of strategies to build rapport with educators. Monitors are more concerned with legal matters, and enter the district more often in response to state mandates. The seven monitor-trainers act like monitors on 9 of 14 dimensions. They find a middle ground between the two pure types on the other 5 dimensions. These latter data are indicated by the location of the symbols (Δ).

The differences between monitors and those who specialize in liaison services are similar although not as extensive. These differences appear in only 7 of the 32 dimensions (Table 3). More liaison specialists provide assistance on administrative matters. They also engage in more long-term projects and are more proactive about delivering services than are monitors. Liaison people also use a wider range of knowledge sources than do monitors. Liaison activities are usually not initiated by the state.

Table 3 about here

The monitor-liaison is much more of a blend of the two pure types than is the monitor-trainer. Monitor-liaisons score closer to the pure monitor on three dimensions and the pure liaison on three others while falling in the middle on the remaining one.

Explanations of the incompatibility between training and monitoring turn in part upon decisions made by the New Jersey Department of Education when the current enforcement system was set up. At that time, dominant forces in the Department argued that its responsibilities for assisting and enforcing were different.

> The role of monitoring and approval is clearly vested in the SEA. The aim of school improvement is vested in the LEA . . . The legislation is clear that the SEA can only intervene in the local school program if the LEA fails to take appropriate action. However, while the legislation does not mandate an SEA role in school improvement, LEAs expect assistance in this area. But they expect assistance in a manner which will not jeopardize their autonomy.
>
> (Ogden, n.d.; p.3)

In addition, there was also apparently some concern that if enforcers offered assistance they might be limited by their own advice. That is, they

might be unwilling to disapprove districts that followed their recommendations without achieving the desired effect. The outcome of this thinking was that for the period from 1975 through 1980, when our data were collected, County Offices had the responsibility for monitoring and EICs for offering training.

These deliberations did not totally preclude County Offices from offering assistance, but when they did so it was at the initiative of an individual field person or County Superintendent. Moreover, monitoring responsibilities were not reduced. As a result, field staff found significant barriers to expanding their role in the direction of more assistance. In fact their time for assistance declined. Field staff who worked in County Offices before passage of the T&E law indicated that they spent more time providing assistance in the earlier period. Monitoring tasks precluded help.

Moreover, the field person's relationship to the state affects the strategies that are used to develop relationships with local educators. Monitors rely on state initiatives to bring them in contact with locals (Table 2, item E). They are less likely to stress technical expertise or use of media (items G1-2). As a result, local educators have relatively little reason to trust the monitors. There is no personal basis for such trust. The monitors have not established that they have a special knowledge base to be relied upon, and they are known to report infractions of the law to higher officials thereby creating problems for locals. For this reason, locals are less likely to request the monitors' services (item E1).

The factors that make monitoring and training incompatible do not impede the combination of monitoring and liaison to the same extent.

Liaison work is more a matter of identifying needs and finding resources to reduce them than actually developing solutions. In the interviews we conducted, monitors argued that their work is, in effect, a needs assessment activity. Discrepancies between the current state of affairs and mandates are needs, or at least they become so once they are reported and the threat of sanctions is invoked. Moreover, there is less risk for the local educator in following a suggestion to try a resource than there is in developing the give-and-take relationship required to receive assistance. Finally, liaison activities--making referrals, passing on bits of information, and so forth--are easier to fit in with more formally defined monitoring responsibilities than are training tasks. For instance, the same old timers who reported they had more time for assistance earlier indicated that under T&E the help they could offer was limited primarily to making referrals to other agencies which is a liaison activity.

Implications

Our examination of the role of Regional Educational Service Agencies in working with school districts has provided a useful opportunity to explore a number of questions about how external agencies can promote knowledge use. In this final section, we turn to the policy and research implications of our findings.

Policy Implications

Our findings offer a number of insights in the design problems of combining enforcement and assistance strategies for promoting school

improvement. The problems of employing an enforcement strategy are very apparent in our work. First, enforcement leads to a backlash. It seems unlikely that New Jersey's monitoring system will continue in its current form for much longer because of external pressures for local autonomy. Second, it is clear that the monitors themselves dislike their role and seek to expand or redefine it so that it has a more positive, assistance-oriented cast. This predilection reflects both personal preferences and recognition of the likelihood of counter-influence attempts.

We have also identified some of the difficulties of combining certain kinds of assistance and enforcement in the same position. The major caveat to our conclusions is that we examined a situation where assistance and enforcement functions were separated by policy. Still, it is difficult to combine monitoring with actual training. When pressed, the people who say they combine the roles indicate that they rarely engage in such activities that characterize training--including offering workshops, developing materials, working on curriculum concerns, and keeping up with information in those fields. Even in a well-staffed system where distance is not a problem, the time requirements of monitoring seem to force out extensive training efforts. Local educators also seem more willing to seek assistance from individuals who do not have monitoring responsibilities. Thus, to ensure that training is delivered, it is important to divide monitoring and training functions by putting them in separate agencies or at least different offices. On the other hand, it is feasible for monitors to serve a liaison function by helping to identify needs and resources and providing information on upcoming mandates and changes in interpretation. Without someone else providing training assistance, however, the impact of such

liaison work is likely to be modest. Moreover, the political benefits of creating good will with the targets of enforcement seem to be minimal. Still, our data suggest that the best way to combine enforcement and assistance is to develop a dual system where monitors concentrate on enforcement issues and make referrals to trainers.

Research Implications

Our study has begun to explore the dynamics of the operation of central--i.e., state and federal--systems for promoting local reform and knowledge use. However, it suggests a number of lines of inquiry to be pursued in the future including questions about (1) why central decision-makers make the decisions they do when designing systems to impact local service agencies, (2) the dynamics of those systems, (3) how local professionals respond to those systems, and (4) the consequences of the resulting changes for service delivery.

Studies such as this one indicate that the question of how to design and implement a central system to impact on local practice is quite complex. How do the decision makers involved decide what they should be doing and what is feasible under their particular circumstances? One can imagine that a variety of economic, political, and cultural factors come into play. For instance, a number of observers have identified the state's political culture--in particular its tradition of interventionism or recognition of local perogatives--as a major factor determining whether central agencies will even contemplate efforts to regulate local programs or offer improvement-oriented assistance (Berke and Moore, 1982; McLaughlin, 1981). The national context is also undergoing a major change, not only with regard to

the levels of funding and the regulations governing programs in many areas, but also in the nation's willingness to give high priority to social programs. In addition to these factors, the knowledge base that decision-makers have about system design issues could affect the options they consider. Thus, it would be useful to know what alternatives they believe exist, which ones they see as technically feasible, and what they consider to be relevant evidence for the utility of different options.

Another issue concerns the dynamics of the operation of systems for affecting local practice. This study indicates some of the difficulties in combining training and enforcement in two state contexts. However, it would be useful to examine how enforcement and assistance are combined in other contexts--both other states and other program areas--to learn how much the difficulties identified here are situation-specific and how much they are generic to the assistance and enforcement tasks.

A third question concerns the way in which local officials respond to various combinations of enforcement and assistance activities. It has been suggested that enforcement and assistance are mutually reinforcing; but when enforcement becomes the motivating factor for school districts, it could undercut assistance efforts in at least three ways. First, it could create an "opportunistic" demand for assistance (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975). That is, local officials could request assistance not to solve what they see as real program problems but to indicate their willingness to comply. Then, assistance might have more symbolic than substantive value. It would not receive adquate administrative support, and the resulting efforts to strengthen programs would suffer. Second, enforcement efforts could curtail the sort of risk-taking that is often a part of constructive

change (Giacquinta, 1975). If there is a likelihood that extreme sanctions will be applied quickly, local educators may be unwilling or unable to explore local conditions and seek new understandings and action alternatives. There is some evidence that this does happen when school districts are under pressure to comply with court desegregation orders (Pauly, 1978). Finally, too close an association between enforcers and helpers could preclude the development of a trust relationship between locals and the helpers.

The fourth issue concerns the ultimate consequences of enforcement-initiated knowledge use activities. The knowledge use we examine here is a benefit to professionals and their organization. To what extent does such knowledge trickle down to where it benefits students? This is an extremely difficult issue because knowledge-use processes are complex, intermittent, stretched over long time periods, and indirect (Weiss, 1977). The methodological problems of tracing out such impacts are severe (Fullan, 1980). Still, this is a concern that plagues not just enforcement-driven efforts--but knowledge use programs more generally--and efforts are underway to address it.

Summary

This review of the activities of field staff in three different kinds of RESAs in two states suggests that those charged with enforcement responsibility would like to provide such assistance themselves. There are important limitations, however, to the kinds of assistance they can provide. They can link districts to sources of training and specialized

assistance, but they cannot provide it themselves. In sum, it seems to be useful to have someone "wear the black hat," but no one wants to do it.

FOOTNOTES

1. The work upon which this publication is based was funded by the National Institute of Education, Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education, and no official endorsement by the National Institute of Education should be inferred. Our thanks to Dick Corbett and Karen Louis for provoking us to write this article. Jerry Murphy and Karen Louis provided helpful critiques to an earlier version of this paper.

2. The main mission at RBS is to ". . . apply the latest results of educational research and development in the improvement of elementary and secodary schools . . ." within the geographical region. Since Pennsylvania and New Jersey are within our regional boundary, the agencies in those states were obvious candidates for this research effort.

3. The County Office site selection was determined by our choice of EIC sites. Once we had decided which EICs to visit, we chose to visit all the County Offices in the two EIC regions.

4. An orthogonal factor analysis with varimax rotation produced the three clusters of activities which we have labeled expert/trainer, liaison, monitor. A technical discussion of the results may be found in Firestone and Wilson, 1981. Briefly, our criterion for inclusion in a factor was a loading of ±.50 and with that in force we found that 8 of our initial 11 activity items fell into one of our three activity clusters.

5. Individual role scores were calculated by summing the items which the factor analysis suggested would cohere to form a single role. The factor analysis indicated four items in the expert/trainer category but upon closer examination we found that two of these items were the least frequently mentioned of the eleven we asked so they were dropped from subsequent analyses.

6. One-way analyses of variance were performed on each of the indices. Results indicated that there were significant between agency scores for training and monitoring but not liaison. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine agency scores on the two dimensions of field agent roles as an indication of the extent to which helping (training) and enforcing (monitoring) missions are carried out in practice.

7. These numbers refer to specific interviews. The first two digits for the field agent interviews (p. 21) represent an agency site. Numbers 01-11 are from the IUs in Pennsylvania, 12-13 are from EICs and 14-23 from County Offices in New Jersey.

8. We defined as a high scorer any person who scored in the top one-third of the distribution for the activity. Note that it is possible for a field agent to score high on more than one activity.

9. As described earlier, a high scoring person is one who scores in the top one-third of that activity distribution. Any one field agent can conceivably score high on anywhere from none to all three of the activities. The distributions from our sample are presented in Table 1. The combined or mixed types are those who score high on more than one activity.

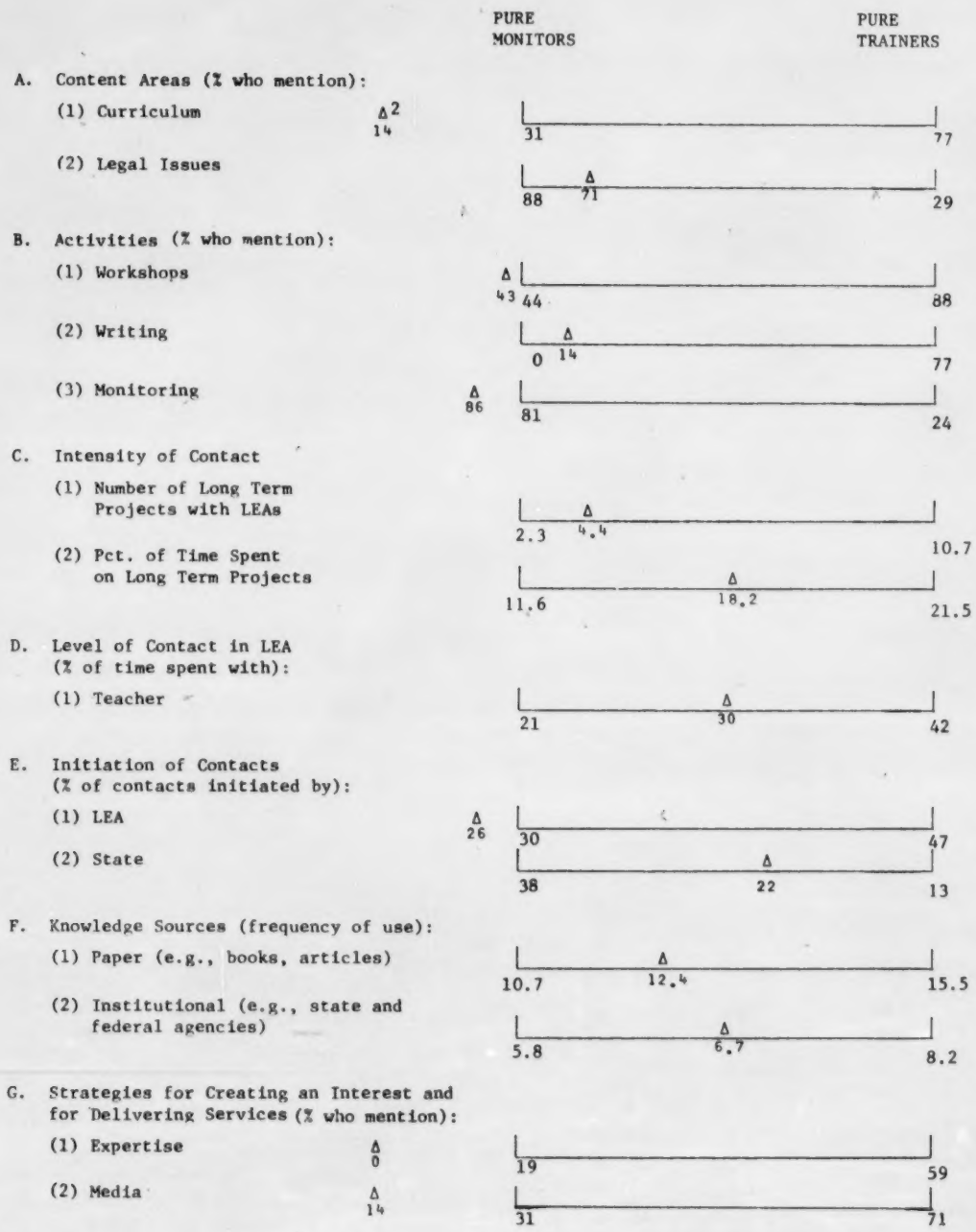
Table 1: Breakdown of Field Agents by Activity Type

Activity Type	N	%
Monitor only	19	14
Trainer only	17	13
Liaison only	13	10
Monitor-Trainer	7	5
Monitor-Liaison	15	11
Trainer-Liaison	22	17
Monitor-Trainer-Liaison	1	1
None	39	29
	133[1]	100

[1]There were five respondents who did not report sufficient data to be included in this analysis.

TABLE 2: Distribution of Monitors, Trainers and Monitor-Trainers (Δ)

Across Distinctive Contextual Dimensions[1]



[1] Categories A, B, and G are taken from our semi-structured interview data while the balance are from the survey data. The rationale for including these particular dimensions from the total of 32 was statistical. We computed a t-test for the survey items and Chi squares for the interview items. We only included those items in this table which showed significant differences at the .05 level between the two pure types.

[2] The symbol (Δ) indicates mean score for monitor-trainers.

TABLE 3: Distribution of Liaisons, Monitors and Liaison-Monitors (Δ)

Across Distinctive Contextual Dimensions[1]

	PURE MONITORS	PURE LIAISONS
A. Content Areas (% who mention):		
(1) Administration	0, Δ[2] 13	77
B. Activities (% who mention):		
(1) Monitoring	81, Δ 80	8
C. Intensity of Contact		
(1) Number of Long Term Projects with LEAs	2.3	Δ 6.9, 9.2
D. Level of Contact in LEA (no differences)		
E. Initiation of Contacts (% of contacts initiated by):		
(1) RESA	25, Δ 29	41
(2) State	38, Δ 26	10
F. Knowledge Sources		
(1) Paper (e.g., books, articles)	10.7	Δ 12.4, 13.8
(2) Institutional (e.g., state and federal agencies)	5.8	8.6, Δ 8.9
G. Strategies (no differences)		

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[1] Categories A, B, and G are taken from our semi-structured interview data while the balance are from the survey data. The rationale for including these particular dimensions from the total of 32 was statistical. We computed a t-test for the survey items and Chi squares for the interview items. We only included those items in this table which showed significant differences at the .05 level between the two pure types.

[2] The symbol (Δ) indicates mean score for monitor-trainers.

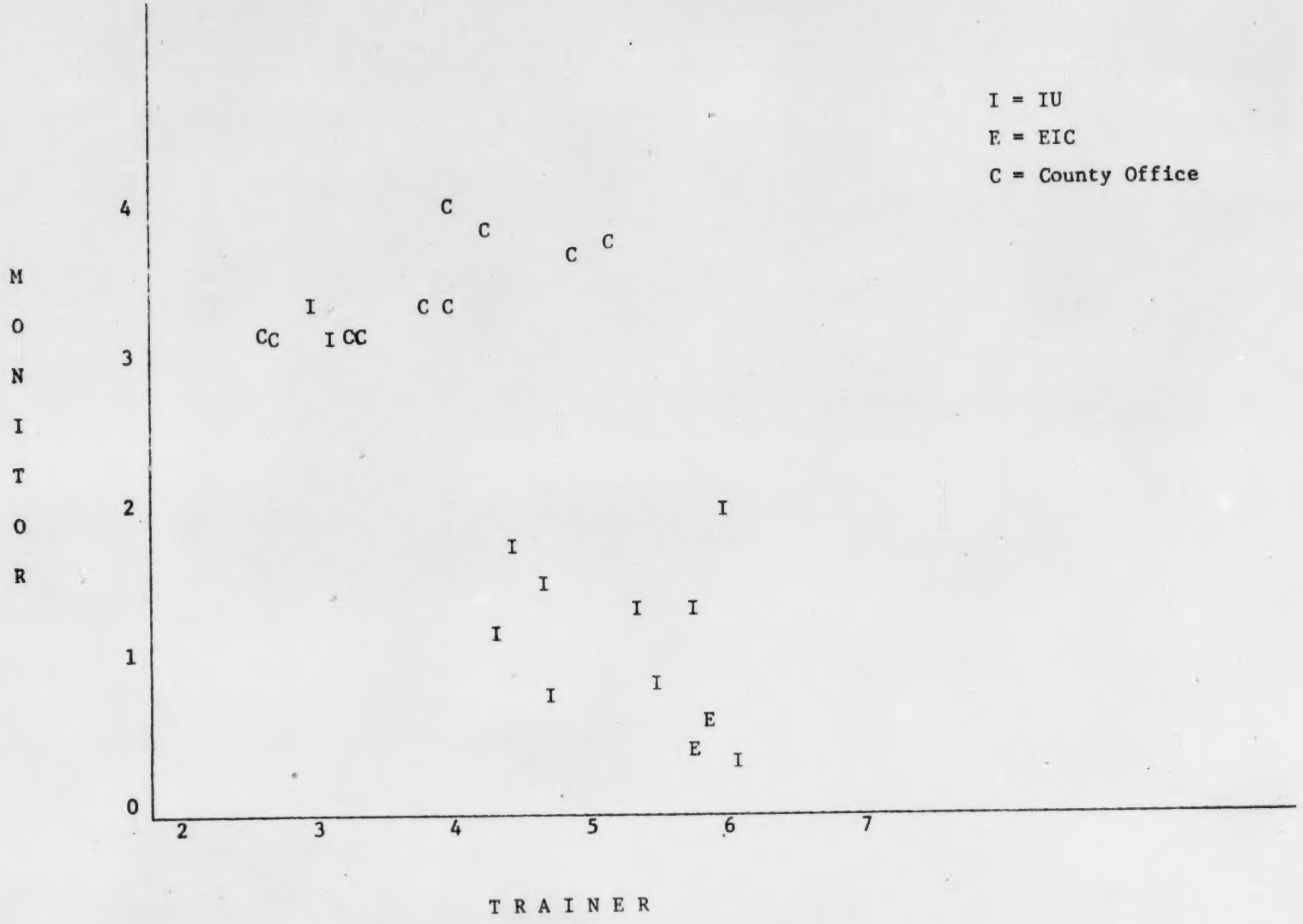

Figure 1. Scattergram of Mean Agency Scores, Monitor x Trainer Activities

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